CBS NEWS
A Division of Columbia Broadcasting System, Inc.
524 West 57 Street
New York, New York 10019
(212) 765-4321

Dear Sirs:

With respect to our telephone conversation of Friday, March 2, 1973, I am enclosing more specific details to open the discussion of my proposed television projects to be filmed in The People's Republic of China for CBS NEWS.

While I have in mind several additional projects which I would welcome the opportunity to discuss with you, the enclosed proposals might be more feasible and of greatest importance at this time.

Each of these proposals attempts to account for the need of Americans to recognize the myths and misconceptions of the past and to provide new understanding of the Chinese people and of The People's Republic of China.

The achievement of such understanding is, of course, a long-term objective which cannot be accomplished with superficial pictures of China. There is a need to identify and to be able to relate to the individual Chinese. In this way it would be possible to understand why the Chinese have chosen the road they have taken and why they are determined to continue along that road.

With respect to your request for prints of some recent CBS NEWS documentaries, we are gathering the material and will be sending them to you.

I hope that it will be possible in the immediate future for me and a CBS NEWS camera team to continue the work begun in my film, "Misunderstanding China." Please excuse my ignorance if any details or possibilities are left out of these proposals. I sincerely look forward to discussing them with you further and to hearing from you at the earliest possible time.

Most respectfully,

Irv Drasnin
Producer

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Department of Information
Peking
The People's Republic of China

March 15, 1973

I. SHANGHAI

I propose three central themes for a television presentation about Shanghai. Paintings, still photographs and historical film could be used in addition to the original filming.

1. Shanghai as a symbol of the old and the new for both Chinese and Americans. To understand the present we must first understand the past; how foreigners saw Shanghai and how the Chinese saw it. This would be done through the juxtaposition of Shanghai's past and present.

Possible locations for filming:

(1) the former International Settlement including the Bund, Nanking Road, the American and British consulates, the Customs House, former places of business and other institutions once controlled by foreigners.

(2) the park at the end of the Bund whose sign once read: "No Dogs or Chinese allowed."

(3) the Hong Kong & Shanghai Bank, now the headquarters of the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee.

(4) the former bank of H.H.Kung, now a city museum with its great porcelain collection.

(5) the former private residence of Sir Ely Kadoorie, the industrialist who once owned all utilities in Shanghai, and which is now the Children's Palace.

(6) the horse racing course, now the People's Square and the main city library.

(7) the dog racing course, now the city cultural square.

(8) the former house of prostitution that is now the Workers Cultural Palace.

(9) the monuments or sites of former monuments to Gordon, Hart, Ward etc. and the streets named for foreigners whose names have now been changed.

(10) Nan Shih, "Chinese town," where the guide books once advised tourists they should not go alone, including:

1) the city temple
2) the Willow Pattern Tea House
3) Yuan Garden
4) the Taiping Lookout

2. Shanghai as a symbol of revolution.

Possible locations for filming include:

(1) the historic sites of the Taipings including the monument or the site of the former monument in memory of foreigners killed in suppressing the Taiping uprising.

(2) Sun Yat-sen's former home and the museum.

(3) historic sites of the student movement, in particular the site of the May 4, 1919 movement.

(4) historic site of the founding of the Chinese Communist Party, 1921.

(5) historic sites of the anti-foreign uprisings of 1931 and 1936 and of the anti-Japanese occupation.

(6) historical film of the entry of the People's Liberation Army into Shanghai, 1948.

3. The New Shanghai. Shanghai as a symbol of the continuing revolutionary struggle and its achievements. The reconstruction of Shanghai. In the words of Chairman Mao: "Make the old serve the new."

Possible locations for filming:

(1) the new satellite cities: the industrial and agricultural belts including a model and perhaps a "not-so-model" commune. Illustration of the principles of self-reliance and self-sufficiency and their application in Chinese life. For example, the 12,000-ton hydraulic press and how it was built.

(2) Ming Hong: where before there was nothing but fields, a city is built in 78 days.

(3) The neighborhood in Shanghai. The life of the Chinese people as seen through a street committee. What is a street committee? How does it work? What does it do? What is its relationship to the people? Who are the people who live on this street? How do they earn a living and spend their leisure hours? What do they think and feel?

This could be a study in microcosm to make understandable what is taking place throughout China by providing an understanding of the place of the family and the individual in Chinese life.

This would provide insight into Chairman Mao's "Mass Line" and help explain how the people of China have achieved so much in so short a time.

It would offer an opportunity to take up the question of the family and family life in China that has been raised in recent years in the West.

(4) The study group: the link between the individual and society and its role as an arena for the discussion of basic policies and programs; as a forum for the direct participation of the individual in the building of a new and modern China.

This would also offer an opportunity to discuss another commonly-held Western notion of recent years, that Chinese life is organized as an instrument for "regimentation" and "thought control."

(5) The Yangtze. China's gateway inward to the rest of China and outward, to the world.

These are my central proposals for a television broadcast about Shanghai. Shanghai's importance, and the importance of any film about China, however, is not in history, buildings and symbols alone, but in people.

If it is possible at this time, I would like to film conversations with people who can serve as a bridge between the old and the new. By filming conversations with people of different ages, those who have experienced life both before and since 1949 and those who have grown up since 1949, it would be possible to understand better the views, attitudes and feelings of the Chinese people. We would be honored to discuss this also with Chang Chun-chiao, chairman of the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee.

The American audience has rarely seen and has little understood the nature and reality of urban life in China. It is important to look beyond the superficial and to understand the Chinese in both the perspective of history and in the reality of how they live now.

Americans have seen a glimpse of China in several recent documentaries already filmed. It is now time, I suggest, for an in-depth picture of what is really taking place among the Chinese people. Interest in China among the American people is at an unprecedented level. The American people are hungry for details. They want to know what they haven't been able to find out for more than two decades.

II. THE PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY

The People's Liberation Army is unlike any other army in the world. It is a symbol, too, of the revolutionary struggle and of the transformation of Chinese society. It is, to my knowledge, a story that has never been told on film in the West.

The historical roots and struggle of the PLA in Ching Kan Shan, The Long March and Yenan periods could be documented using paintings, still photographs and historical film as is available.

Possible locations for filming:

(1) if possible, historically significant sites along the route of The Long March, in Ching Kan Shan and Yenan.

(2) the re-living of this experience by the youth of China today.

(3) the PLA as a model of self-sufficiency, with its own industry and its own agriculture.

(4) San Ba Chuyi, the eight rules of discipline with its historical roots in the First Red Army including the Kou Tien Conference site.

(5) the role and purpose of the PLA in Chinese life, not just as an army but as a political organization with a unique relationship to the people. The role of the PLA in civilian life as well as its military role.

(6) the training and regimen of the Chinese soldier; his daily life, philosophy and views and how he sees his place in Chinese society.

(7) A conversation, if possible, with Yeh Ching-ying, vice-chairman of the military commission of the Chinese Communist Party.

(8) the People's Militia and its relationship to the PLA, and the orientation and self-defense concept of military training and preparations in China.

No area in the life of any nation is so frequently misunderstood as the philosophy and role of its military. This is especially true of the American view of the Chinese military for the past quarter of a century.

III. TACHAI

I propose this as a film study of the problems confronting the great majority of Chinese -- the peasants -- and how they have faced and dealt with those problems during the past twenty-five years.

It is a dramatic story: the transformation of "seven gullies and eight ridges" into productive land starting without even a wheelbarrow.

It would portray the experience, the trials and triumphs of poor peasants engaged in an historic struggle:

(1) the struggle against nature. The Tachai region for centuries had been plagued by drought, flood and inhospitable terrain. The region had a history of poverty and exploitation.

(2) the economic struggle to produce enough from the land to survive. The story begins under the landlords and continues through land reform to the eventual establishment of a people's commune. It reflects the principles of self-reliance and self-sufficiency. It exemplifies Chairman Mao's "mass line" in theory and practice.

Chairman Mao has said that in agriculture, learn from Tachai. It has been observed by an outsider that the men and women of Tachai represent "the future of mankind." What is there to be learned from Tachai? What does Tachai tell Americans about the people of China and about the Chinese revolution?

Through its leader, Chen Yung-kwei, and the 380 members of this village, Americans could see the revolutionary struggle in microcosm as it is taking place throughout China among 800-million people.

This film could use historical photographs and film footage together with original footage and interviews to provide dramatic insight into China's past, present and future.